Mei Mei
THE BUNNY
ILLUSTRATED BY
Lauren O'Hara

Mei Mei's Melody

Laufey

Larghetto cantabile

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Penguin Workshop

To my parents, grandparents, twin sister, and my wonderful teachers,
all of whom inspire me to chase my dreams—Laufey

For Theodora—Lauren O'Hara

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First Movement: A Bunny and a Dream

Mei Mei is a little bunny with a big dream.

Mei Mei plays
along with her violin.
Her tiny paws play
minor and major scales,
practicing toward perfection.

Because tomorrow is her first recital with an orchestra.
And her dream is to share her music with the world.

But the only people to ever hear Mei Mei's music are Mama, Papa, and of course, Beethoven.

All sorts of animals will be at the recital: chipmunks, squirrels, frogs, and even snails!

The thought of performing for everyone makes the butterflies in her belly flit and flutter.

"What if I play the wrong note?" Mei Mei asks Mama.

"Just keep playing, and you'll find the way to make it right."

Mama always has a way with words to help Mei Mei make sense of the world.

Second Movement: A Hare's Heart

"As long as the music comes from your little hare heart, you don't have to be perfect," Mama says.

"Think of an orchestra like the ocean. Waves rise . . . ," Mama says, raising her arm with an imaginary baton, "and they crash. Do you know what makes them do so?"

Mei Mei shakes her bunny head no.

"The moon. She is the conductor. And the tides rise and fall on her command.

"And the wind . . . can you see the wind?" Mama asks, and Mei Mei shakes her head no again.

"But you can *feel* the wind. *That* is music."

"And you, my little bunny, are but one of many waves in the ocean."

Mei Mei's eyes grow heavy to the sound of Mama's words.

"Let the moon guide your way, and all the right notes will follow . . ."

Interlude

Waves crash.
The wind sings.
And the moon hangs high
in the dark nocturnal sky.

"Why do I love the moon so much?"
Mei Mei dreams.

The flutter of butterflies wakes Mei Mei from her slumber.

"Remember: A bunny never hops off stage!" Mama says as Mei Mei gets ready to leave. "If you make a mistake, take a deep breath and listen to the wind . . ."

A hop through the woods always calms her bunny nerves. So, she hops and hops, letting the sounds of the forest soothe her.

H'OPERA HOUSE

Third Movement: The Finale

Mei Mei's dream is soon to become a reality. Months of practice have led to this moment.

The room falls so silent she can hear a baby carrot drop on the floor.

The conducktor raises her baton. And slowly, string instruments begin on her command.

The brass section bellows.
Woodwinds tremolo.
And strings pizzicato.

An orchestra in perfect harmony and timing.

But the scales are harder than Mei Mei remembers.
The tempo is faster. Her tiny fingers get all tangled up.
And then . . .

A wrong note.

It echoes . . .
and echoes . . .
and echoes . . .

all throughout
the concert hall.

What's a bunny to do?

"Feel the wind . . . find the notes to make it right."

Mei Mei closes her eyes and listens. She takes a deep breath. And she *becomes* the wind.

Wrong notes become right. Dissonance becomes beautiful.

Every ear hangs on the bewitching trills from Mei Mei's violin.

And just like that . . .

. . . a little bunny's big dream becomes reality.
The butterflies in her belly become sparks in
her hare heart. All the animals cheer.

Mama hums and Papa whistles and Beethoven buzzes.
And the symphony sings.

The End

A Note from Laufey

Dear reader,

I'm so glad you picked up this book. Mei Mei's story is close to my heart because it reminds me of how I first fell in love with music and performing. I was a little girl learning to play the cello and piano, dreaming of one day performing fearlessly on the big stage.

When I was growing up, classical music education helped me find my voice, build confidence, and feel like I belonged. That's why I started The Laufey Foundation: to help make music education and orchestra programs more accessible for kids and teens everywhere.

Keep making music in your own way. Whether you hum, sing, tap, or dream, you are already writing a beautiful story.

Yours,

Laufey

GLOSSARY *of* MUSICAL TERMS

Note—A single musical sound, like a tiny building block for songs
Scale—A set of notes that go up and down like climbing a musical staircase
Chord—A few notes played together to make a rich sound
Tempo—How fast or slow the music goes
Harmony—Two or more notes played together that sound nice
Dissonance—When notes clash with each other, creating musical tension
Trill—A quick back-and-forth between two notes, like a little musical wiggle
Tremolo—A fast sound made by playing the same note over and over quickly
Pizzicato—When string players pluck the strings with their fingers instead of using a bow
Conductor—A person who leads a group of musicians
Orchestra—A large group of musicians playing different instruments
Symphony—A big, beautiful piece of music, written in movements, played by an orchestra
Movement—A section of a symphony, like a chapter in a big piece of music

Mei Mei's Melody

Laufey

Larghetto cantabile

What's a bunny to do?

When a wrong note echoes through the H'Opera House,
Mei Mei learns that even mistakes can make beautiful music.